

Testimony on 5322

Raised Bill No. 5322: AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A HUMAN SERVICES PERMIT AND A REQUIREMENT THAT SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS CONDUCT HOME VISITS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Submitted By: **Christine Merdinian Valdez, School Social Worker**

Dear Education Committee members:

I have been a School Social Worker for the past 16 years. The rise of the importance of SEL in schools, as well as the reduction in attendance, is what has brought this (HB 5322) to the table I am sure. That being said, this is ludicrous for a number of reasons...

1) School Social Workers do not have time to take on these additional tasks. In our current state nearly every student is in need of our services and time out of school is out of the question.

2) By CT licensure requirements (<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/School-Social-Work/School-Social-Work/How-To>) a School Social Worker MUST be a Master of Social Work *MSW.

3) If the BOE's contract Bachelor of Social Work *BSW or others as Human Service employees, where does the liability fall? Who is the direct client service worker?

4) Only professionals like licensed MSW's, Psychologists, psychiatrists and licensed counselors are qualified for mental health services. The position described in HB 5322 should be a case management/referral position ONLY. I would even go as far to say only BSW's are truly qualified for such work.

5) What I am currently experiencing in schools is increased expectations/higher demands on Social Workers and teachers, short staffings/positions unable to be filled and ideas with no time in union contracts or for employees to implement the plans. I recognize this as a means to address these issues...this is only the case if ADDITIONAL qualified professionals are hired to take on these roles. Adding to current staff responsibilities in an already overwhelming work environment is unexceptable.

The mental health of school staff is at risk right now just like the students. I do feel home visitors are an essential missing piece in many communities right now. It is just not a role that should be tied to licensed School Social Workers, but rather a role that should work in concert with them.

Sincerely,

Chrsitine M. Valdez, Licensed School Social Worker